Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1976

AG

In response to inquiries from the news media regarding the Civil Rights Division's review of the Martin Luther King files, Attorney General Edward H. Levi today issued the following statement:

I have directed the Office of Professional Responsibility, headed by Michael Shaheen, to complete a review of all records in the Department of Justice concerning the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Civil Rights Division, under the personal direction of Assistant Attorney General J. Stanley Pottinger, completed on April 9 a five-month preliminary review of files at FBI headquarters. As a result of this preliminary review, the Civil Rights Division has recommended that the review be carried forward to completion with an additional examination of records at FBI headquarters and field offices. It is believed that more than 200,000 documents may be involved.

On the basis of this preliminary review, Assistant Attorney General Pottinger stated that his tentative conclusions were (1) there was no basis to believe that the FBI in any way caused the death of Dr. King, (2) no evidence was discovered that the FBI investigation of the assassination of Dr. King was not thorough and honest, and (3) instances were found indicating that the FBI undertook a systematic program of harassment of Dr. King in order to discredit him and harm both him and the movement he led.

ENCLOSURE

In o[illegible]ing on April 26 the comp[illegible]e review by Mr. Shaheen, I directed that the investigation be completed forthwith and that answers to four specific questions be furnished to me and FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley on the basis of the review of all documents:

-- Whether the FBI investigation of Dr. King's assassination was thorough and honest;

-- Whether there is any evidence that the FBI was involved in the assassination of Dr. King;

-- Whether, in light of the first two matters, there is any new evidence which has come to the attention of the Department concerning the assassination of Dr. King;

-- Whether the nature of the relationship between the Bureau and Dr. King calls for criminal prosecutions, disciplinary proceedings, or other appropriate action.

Mr. Pottinger pointed out that the Civil Rights Division has been continuously investigating allegations concerning the assassination of Dr. King as these allegations come to the attention of the Department.